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ABSTRACT

An administrator tells how the Toledo public schools developed security plans to minimize damages resulting from student unrest. According to the author, the first step taken by the Toledo schools was to take a strong stand against violence at athletic events. Next, they established a systemwide lighted school program and emphasized total community involvement in after-school use of school buildings. The third step involved the development and passage of the Toledo Safe Passage To School Law which fines or jails those convicted of assault (either physical or verbal) on a student or any other person going to or from school or on school grounds. Finally, they established a sophisticated radio-telephone communications system to cover basic school security and public relations program which covers permits for use of school facilities by both in-school and out-of-school groups. (JF)

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San Francisco, Calif. March 17-21, 1973

SPEAKER: Hilton H. Murphy, Administrative Assistant, Community Relations, Public Schools, Toledo, Ohio

TOPIC: VANDALS, ARSONISTS, BOMBS, DOGS

PLACE: Room 403, Civic Auditorium

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SCHOOL SECURITY POSITIVE ACTION

The Toledo Public Schools has generally escaped major student unrest and problems because of positive steps taken by school authorities, and through the development of sound security plans for dealing with disorders.

It is not my intention to explain the virtues of Toledo, which as we all know in this day and age could change overnight. In fact, I am in Federal Court on a case of lack of due process at the present time. It is my intention, however, to get across the idea to this assembled group of educators, that we have to "Fry our own kettle of fish," and that in education, we cannot continue makeshift means of coping with those who are bent on disruption and vandalism, and ignore or define away the problem.

Four major developments have occurred in Toledo concerning security over the past four years.

The first was a forceful stand taken at high school athletic events; with this stand, we have built up a strong network of community involvement that has carried over into our other security problems.

I simply decided four years ago that we had to stop excusing youthful violence at games as a "sign of the times" or a "reflection of racial tensions," or similar platitudes. Those things say a lot and do nothing.

We in Toledo because of our early concern have taken a leadership position throughout the country in our attempt to control crowds at athletic contests with the help of community groups. In other words, we have the community involved.

I wish to repeat a statement I made four years ago to a national athletics directors' meeting in Washington, D.C. "If we do not fight the battle on the battlefield, the battlefield being the football stadium or high school gymnasium, the battle will be carried to the very door of the school itself." This has happened in many school systems.

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In an era when it is popular to break down the establishment, we must protect our high school activities. The danger is a real thing and it is a national disgrace that these incidents are happening throughout our country.

We decided if only our courts would take a firm stand and crack down on juvenile offenders, then many of our problems could be solved.

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We sold the idea that school activities have a constructive focus with the guidance of teachers and administrators, and if activities are forced out of the schools, then students would still interact outside the schools in other less constructive ways, without focus or supervision. Incidents happening in the schools carry over to the community. Incidents happening in the community carry over into the schools, so the problems involve the entire community and must be solved by the entire community.

Our approach boiled down to setting up a task force of community resource people to help attack our school problems. This we did. We involved school and game officials, civic groups, the safety director, police and fire command officers, booster clubs, parents, student leaders, respectable citizens, the mayor, and the courts in a true grass root preventive program of the total community. We work under the slogan, "Let's Stay Together," and have an on-going group that is not a paper program, that involves a lot of work and planning. In the process we have built four new stadiums in the past three years all by local community funding. Also, at a recent national meeting of police departments, Toledo was declared a model area for cooperation between schools and police departments.

The second major development was concentrated efforts for preventventive methods, involving the total community. We established a system-wide lighted school program in 1966 to put emphasis on the utilization of our seventy-five school buildings after school, nights and weekends, by children, adults, and families, to enrich their lives. For the children we have a program of extended education to meet the specific needs of each local elementary area plus recreation programs to provide a healthy outlet for youthful energy. For adults and families we have special interest courses involving and solving community problems. Valuable social contacts and physical activity have brought the community closer together. We have helped with vandalism in our lighted school program by floodlighting our school buildings, which helps the community get into the swing of the lighted school concept. This has had many side benefits as witness to a forty million dollar bond issue passed in November 1972 for renovating of all our buildings, the building of eight new skill centers and three new junior high schools.

We started a human relations program in 1969. Again, we went into this program to make it work and we have. It is important that all of us in school work understand and appreciate the various cultures and diversity which surrounds us, and which makes up the society in which we live and work, and in which our children will participate more and more in our mobile society.

However, at this point in 1969, we were forced in a shift in prevention from social to more security work, schools cannot "zero in" on underlying human relations problems when a few continue to disrupt. "Racially toned" incidents declined school wide, but extortion, theft, and assault continued mainly in the seventh and eighth grades and high schools. The unlawful relations of the individual to society had to be cracked down on hard and curbed where disruption was involved, and done quietly but decisively.

The third major development developed. It was at this point I learned you must do your homework. I simply took all the police and school records of a period from the opening of school in September to the end of November, a two-month period and documented 135 offenses occurring inside our schools, and 144 offenses outside the schools or to and from school. Arrests were made in 237 offenses. Of these 237, 108 were assault and battery incidents.

I also checked all local and state law ordinances and found none of them had teeth in them to deter any unlawful acts.

We took these documented facts to our task force and then set down recommendations to the mayor and city council on a unified front, and asked for safe passage to school law to handle loitering aroundschool buildings and stadiums and to cover any harassment of our school children either to or from school,or on the school grounds, steets and on sidewalks facing the school area.

Our Superintendent, Frank Dick, had the courage to present a proposal to the city council based on my findings; a proposed law which would provide a fine of up to $1,000.00, a year in jail, or both, upon conviction of assulting, harassing, or using obscene language to school personnel while on school property, going to or from schools, or in stadiums or gymnasiums, or the grounds thereof.

This ordinance under section 1 of the Toledo Municipal Code was a new section 17-1-16 which includes assaults upon a teacher, disrupting a class or school activity, and under section 1, 17-1-17 assualt upon a student or other person going to or from school or on school grounds. Both were entirely new ordinances since our research had discovered loopholes in all existing ordinances.

This ordinance was passed unanimously and has become known as The Toledo Safe Passage To School Law.

Representative Jonathan B. Bingham (D-N.Y.) has tried to sponsor a National Safe Passage to School Law, and has met opposition, and for the life of me I cannot understand why.

I have taken six cases to court and have had a conviction on all six cases, three six-month jail sentences, one one-year jail sentence, two heavy fines, and a one year probation sentence. I also want to say I took the cases to court which I thought I had a good chance of winning. But the threat is now there and troubles have become greatly improved.

Our fourth step covers the basic security of our school system and all falls within the community relations department which covers permits for use of school facilities, athletics, physical educations, intramurals, extramurals, lighted schools, human relations, and school security.

We have community coordinator covering each of our high schools and the feeder schools to that high school. He works full time in his area of assignment.

Special lines of communications have been established with a base communication station in the community relations offices which has instand A.M. and F.M. radio contact on two established channels. Each coordinator has an A.M. car radio receiving and sending unit. They also have an F.M. two-way band unit which they carry at all times, to lunch or wherever. Instant communication is established with the central office, also within this system communication we are established with the police department, the detective bureau, the juvenile bureau, and the police human relations divisions, nine community coordinators, two juvenile authorities, two detectives, seven human relations police; all twenty are on immediate call and can be in any school in a matter of minutes. In addition, every school building by dialing on any school telephone three

numbers, can reach the detective bureau and the school communication desk in time of emergency.

There is a coordinator of student affairs in each high school and three security school monitors recruited from the school community and one in large elementary schools. All are part of this system.

This entire network meets with me each month to review present procedures and add improvements and new techniques in handling of school problems.

We also keep in constant touch with the news media. Too many school officials try to sweep incidents under the rug, only to have the news media subsequently pull the rug out from under them. We keep the news media well informed and in turn they have been kind to us by printing what is necessary, usually to our advantage.

The school community coordinators have been a stabilizing force to our entire community because of the nature of their work.

Two guidelines I give to them are:

1. Never promise anything you cannot produce, but be helpful to people in any way possible.

2. Be honest with everyone you come in contact with, tell it like it is.

I also have told our coordinators something I believe in very strongly, and that fact is you have to bluff your way through many situations. Too many people and some principals have taken the course that they are afraid to act because the law will not hold them. I think you have to act and worry about the law later because this is exactly what the outside groups are doing. They are not worrying about the law. They come into a school, walk in, and try to take over.

We do not permit anyone to come in our school unless they report to the principal. All of our buildings, are posted with signs telling visitors to report to the principal's office. We enforce this so no one misunderstands and everyone is treated the same.

The community coordinators spend time in automobiles going from building to building, attending public meetings within their high school district, going to all their high schools and large elementary activities. They are always in touch with headquarters, they are comfortable with the offbeat character, the clergyman, with a teacher or or truant, with the troublemaker, or peacemaker. Their judgements are sharpened by experience. They thoroughly know the neighborhoods to which they are assigned.

Whatever the policies of a school, and no matter what the school handbook says or does not say, there is no substitute for keeping lines of communications open between students, teachers, citizens, principals, and others in the community. The coordinators get right down to where the people are and the action is.

I would like to close by saying that isn't it a shame that we continually have to convince people that they must not retreat in the face of brazen unruly hoods, not unlimited numbers of deliquents, but a handfull? A gang of over grown brats who attack innocent citizens and show "respect" for the law enforcement by slugging and kicking law enforcement people.

Isn't it too bad that all this preparation has become necessary in the first place? Is this meant to be the American Way of Life?

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